

Community Mental Health Coalition Newsletter

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New Mental Health Liaison Position

The State Dept. of Health has defined Mental Illness as a public health issue. The Lewis County Public Health and Social Services Department has therefore taken the step to create a Mental Health Liaison position with the primary role to provide leadership in improving mental and behavioral health services in Lewis County. The Mental Health Liaison will play a central role on the Mental Health Coalition.

Welcome to Carolyn Price, MSW, who has been hired for the new position of Mental Health Liaison. Carolyn will be working out of the Lewis County Public Health and Social Services Department. Her contact information is cjprice@co.lewis.wa.us 360-740-1430. We thank Kathleen Eussen, Director, for her work to make this position a reality, and offer a very sincere thank you to the Board of County Commissioners for their support.



MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

One outcome of the mental health community conference in May was the formation of a new, on-going Mental Health Coalition to refine and implement the Mental Health Strategic Plan developed by the Mental Health Needs Work Group, which has sunset. Sponsored by the Lewis County Community Health Partnership, the Coalition's first meeting is October 16th. Look for more news from the Coalition and the Partnership soon.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI) Lewis

The featured speaker at the July meeting was attorney Jim Buzzard, who informed those present of the multiple options available to be assured a plan is in place to take care of your family member with mental or physical disabilities when you are not able to do so.

Judge Lawler was asked to speak in August about the need for community services

to assist people with mental illness in the justice system, and alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.

NAMI Lewis meets the second Tuesday of each month, 6:15 – 7:00 pm business meeting, program meeting and round table discussion 7:00 – 8:30 pm. Providence Professional Bldg (former St Helen Hospital) 1st floor round meeting room. Light refreshments.

Everyone is invited. For information contact Marilyn Gallagher, Chair 748-0569 danmar@compprime.com

The NAMI Lewis Family Support Group meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month 5:30 – 7:00 pm in the same room. For information contact Judy Baskett 785-9668 baskettcase@myway.com



In this issue:

- New Mental Health Liaison, page 1
- New Mental Health Coalition, page 1
- NAMI, page 1
- Law and Justice Update, page 2
- High Utilizer Task Force, page 2
- LRA Training, page 2
- Timberland Regional Support Network, page 2

LAW AND JUSTICE UPDATE

• High Utilizer Task Force: Alternatives to Incarceration

At the request of the Board of County Commissioners, Public Health & Social Services Department Director, Kathleen Eussen, has formed a community collaborative project chaired by Social Services Manager Tara Smith to develop resources and options for mentally ill people who are high utilizers of the justice system. In addition to more frequent incarceration, in-

mates with mental illness spend one third more time in jail than the average offender. A committed group of people have been meeting regularly since Spring to create alternatives to jail. Three subcommittees have been formed to advance alternatives through 1) supported housing; 2) 1290 legislation, which facilitates "fast-tracking" individuals with a mental health diagno-

sis into Medicaid; and 3) Behavioral Care Plans for inmates.

Most recently Kathy Alves, ARNP and her staff presented an excellent program on the Thurston County Mental Health Court. Five task force members attended Court for a day to learn about alternatives to incarceration.

• Least Restrictive Alternative (LRA) Training

On August 28th, Pierce County Superior Court and Crisis Services staff presented a training on Least Restrictive Alternatives (LRA) to Lewis County judges, attorneys, jail personnel, and mental health professionals. The LRA's purpose is to provide a substitute for remaining in the hospital during the mental health recovery period "for the chronic, hard-to-

stabilize patient, the patient who is not able to stand alone after a long hospitalization, or the dually-diagnosed respondent, who needs more intensive support and case management." Attendees learned about the process of the LRA, instances of its appropriate use, how it functions in conjunction with the court process, and how it provides cost benefit by reduc-

ing bed days while building on an individual's strengths. The purpose of this training was to gain an understanding of how the LRA could be most effectively used in Lewis County, and what are the challenges of its implementation. We are very thankful to Ken Nichols and Audrey Osborne of Pierce County's Superior Court for facilitation this training.

Coalition Contact Information

*If you are
interested in
any of the
projects
mentioned
and have not
been
contacted,
please feel
free to email
or call the
leaders.*

TIMBERLANDS REGIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK (TRSN)

Those of you who attended the mental health conference will remember it was dedicated to Midge Burmaster, TRSN Administrator. Midge was so supportive of the good things happening in Lewis County and the collaboration. She intended to be at the conference but died April 3rd. It was a great loss but we are very pleased to report Bill Hardy has been hired as the new administrator and started in his new position August 1st. Not only does Bill come to us with very good experience and credentials, but Midge thought he was great.

Brian Cameron, TRSN Fiscal Manager, and Sandy Everman, Administrative Assistant, have done an outstanding job keeping the office operating and assisting the Governing Board Chair, Bud Cuffel, Pacific County Commissioner, Vice President Donna Karvia, Lewis County and Secretary-Treasurer Fred Johnson, Wahkiakum County.

Brian, and Judy Baskett, Advisory Board Chair, took the lead on

submitting (and receiving funding for) our block grant plan for 2009 to the Mental Health Division and the Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council and received congratulations on the innovation in the plan, including the Equine Therapy program through Cascade Mental Health Care.